

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6790

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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TAGS:PGOV,FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH CABINET CHANGE: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

REF: PARIS 940

SUMMARY. GISCARDJS CABINET RESHUFFLE WAS NOT A MOJOR

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SHAKEUP BUT CLEARLY INDICATED THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS IN

FULL CONTROL OF THE EXERCISE. TOP GOVERNMENT FIGURES SAW THEIR POSITIONS CONFIRMED. CHANGES REFLECTED AN EMPHASIS ON YOUTH, WOMAN AND TECHNICAL ABILITIES. END SUMMARY.

1. A FINE TUNING -- FOR THE MOST PART, JANUARY 12 CABINET CHANGE CAME OUT PRETTY MUCH AS PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING IN HIS PUBLIC COMMENTS OF JANUARY 11 HAD PREDICTED -- A FINE TUNING OF THE PREVIOUS TEAM BUT FALLING FAR SHORT OF A MAJOR SHAKEUP. THUS, INCUMBENTS RETAINED MAJOR POSTS SUCH AS THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP AND THE MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERIOR, JUSTICE FINANCE AND DEFENSE. MOREOVER, WITH 13 GAULLISTS, 12 INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS, 8 CENTRISTS AND 10 NON-AFFILIATED, THE NEW CABINET REFLECTS NO PRONOUNCED REBALANCING IN TERMS OF PARTY REPRESENTATION. FINALLY AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THERE WAS NO MOVE TO LURE INTO THE GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS OF THE MORE MODERATE LEFT SUCH AS FORMER MRG FIGURES, CAILLAVET AND BROSSE.

2. GISCARD IN CONTROL -- GISCARD CLEARLY SHOWED HIMSELF IN TOTAL CONTROL OF THE PROCEEDINGS. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RECENT FRENCH HISTORY, IT WAS THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF WHO PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED JANUARY 11 THE COMING CABINET CHANGE AND SET ITS PARAMETERS. IT WAS ALSO GISCARD WHO PERSONALLY EXPLAINED TO A TV AUDIENCE THE EVENING OF JANUARY 12 WHAT IT ALL MEANT. MOREOVER, WITH THE INCLUSION OF 10 NON-POLITICAL PERSONALITIES, THE CABINET HAS BECOME MORE THAN EVER GISCARD'S OWN, THUS INCREASING THE PRESIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE REGIME. INDEED, THE MAJORITY OF NEW APPOINTEES WERE MORE KNOWN FOR THEIR TECHNICAL OR PROFESSIONAL PROWESS THAN FOR THEIR POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS.

3. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT CERTAIN MAJOR GOVERNMENT FIGURES ALSO SAW THEIR OWN STATUSES ENHANCED. FOR EXAMPLE, GISCARD WENT OUT OF HIS WAY IN HIS COMMENTS ANNOUNCING THE CABINET CHANGE TO CONFIRM THAT PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC WOULD REMAIN AT THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE PROMOTION OF MINISTER OF JUSTICE LECANUET TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE RANK OF MINISTER OF STATE ALSO WAS AN INDICATION THAT HIS POSITION (AND PERHAPS BY IMPLICATION THAT OF THE CENTRISTS WITHIN THE COALITION) IS SOLID WITH GISCARD.

4. YOUTH, WOMEN AND TECHICIANS -- IN TERMS OF A POSITION-BY-POSITION ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGES, THREE ESSENTIAL FACTORS EMERGE. THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS YOUNGER

(FORM AN AVERAGE AGE OF 54 TO 49, WHICH INCIDENTALLY IS GISCARD'S OWN AGE), MORE FEMININE (FIVE WOMEN MEMBERS) AND, AS NOTED ABOVE, LESS DOMINATED BY POLITICIANS.

5. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN MADE YOUNGER BY THE DEPARTURE OF PIERRE ABELIN, 66 FORMER MINISTER OF COOPERATION, AND ANDRE JARROT, ALSO 66, FORMER MINISTER FOR THE QUALITY OF LIFE. ENTERING THE GOVERNMENT ARE MEN AS PEIRRE MEHAIGNERIE, 36, A CENTRIST DEPUTY WITH LONG EXPERIENCE IN AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS, NAMED TO REPLACE JEAN-FRANCOIS DENIAU AS STATE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE. NAMED AS STATE SECRETARY FOR THE CONDITION OF MANUAL

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LABOR WAS ELYSEE COUNSELOR LINOEL STOLERU, 38, AND NAMED AS STATE SECRETARY FOR UNIVERSITIES WAS MADAME ALICE SAUNIER-SEITE, 40, RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF REIMS. THESE NEW APPOINTMENTS, COUPLED WITH THE DEPARTURE OF OLDER MINISTERS AND STATE SECRETARIES, UNDERLINE THE FACT THAT GISCARD HIMSELF IS AWARE OF THE MILEAGE HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GETS OUT OF HIS YOUTHFUL IMAGE.

6. MANY NEW APPOINTEES ARE EXPERTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS. THIS FOR EXAMPLE IS PARTICULARLY THE CASE WITH JEAN FRANCOIS-PONCET, A CAREER DIPLOMAT NAMED TO THE NEWLY-CREATED SECOND POST OF STATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. WITH HIS REPUTED EUROPEAN LEANINGS HE MAY HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO LEND CREDENCE TO THE AVOWED VGE PURPOSE OF BRINGING FRANCE CLOSER TO THE EC. THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF THIS CABINET RESHUFFLE IS FURTHER REFLECTED IN THE APPOINTMENT OF RAYMOND BARRE, FORMER VICE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, TO THE POST OF MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE. WITH HIS BACKGROUND IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, HE APPEARS WELL SUITED TO HIS JOB.

7. THE CABINET RESHUFFLE ALSO REFLECTS THE IMPORTANCE THAT VGE ATTACHES TO THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN HIS CABINET. THE GOF IS BOASTING THAT WITH FIVE WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT, IT HOLDS THE WORLD RECORD. HOWEVER, IN THIS CONTEXT, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WITH 16 MINISTERS AND 27 STATE SECRETARIES, GISCARD ALSO HAS ONE OF THE LARGEST CABINETS IN WESTERN EUROPE. THE NEW APPOINTMENTS ARE THOSE OF MADAME ALICE SAUNIER-SEITE MENTIONED ABOVE AND MADAME CHRISTIANE SCRIVENER TO THE NEWLY-CREATED POST OF STATE SECRETARY FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS.

8. BUT POLITICS PLAYS A ROLE -- THE PRESENCE OF A HIGHER NUMBER OF TECHNOCRATS IN THE GOVERNMENT THAN PREVIOUSLY SHOULD NOT OVERSHADOW, HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT GISCARD HAS KEPT IN MIND THE POLITICAL POWER OF CABINET POSTS. LONG-TIME FRIENDS SUCH AS DE LIPKOWSKI AND RAYMOND BARRE HAVE BEEN REWARDED FOR THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH THE PRESIDENT. SPECIFIC REASONS CAN BE TENTATIVELY ADVANCED FOR EACH APPOINTMENT. JEAN-CHRISTIAN TAITTINGER, INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN SENATOR, PERHAPS OWES HIS

APPOINTMENT AS STATE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, A NEWLY
CREATED JOB, TO HIS DEMONSTRATED FUND-RAISING ABILITIES.
JACQUES MEDECIN, INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN MAYOR OF NICE,
WAS APPOINTED STATE SECRETARY FOR TOURISM, PARTIALLY AS
A REWARD FOR HIS RECENT CONVERSION TO THE INDEPENDENT
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REPUBLICAN PARTY.

9. THE LOSERS: IN ALL, SIX GOVERNMENT FIGURES LOST
THEIR POSTS. IT IS TOO EARLY TO POSIT IRONCLAD REASONS
FOR THEIR DEPARTURE BUT SPECULATION AMONG POLITICAL
OBSERVERS HAS ALREADY BEGUN. PIERRE ABELIN IS SAID TO
HAVE HAD TWO STRIKES AGAINST HIM: HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH
THE CLAUSTRE AFFAIR AND HIS AGE. SIMILARLY, ANDRE
JARROT, FORMER MINISTER FOR THE QUALITY OF LIFE, WHO
NEVER REALLY TOOK HOLD OF HIS MINISTRY, MAY ALSO HAVE
SEEN HIS AGE WORK AGAINST HIM IN TERMS OF THE PRESIDENT'S
NEED TO DEMONSTRATE VIGOROUS EMPHASIS ON REFORM. AYMAR
ACHILLE-FOULD, FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR POSTS AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS, WAS SUPPOSEDLY DROPPED BECAUSE THE
BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS APPARENTLY DISSATISFIED WITH HIS
HANDLING OF THE PRESIDENT'S \$1 BILLION INVESTMENT PRO-
GRAM TO MODERNIZE TELECOMMUNICATIONS. NORBERT SEGARD,
THE NEW PPT MINISTER, DEVELOPED GOOD RELATIONS WITH
BUSINESS AS MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL COMMERCE. HE ALSO
NEEDS SOME TIME OFF FROM TRAVELING ABROAD TO WAGE A
CAMPAIGN TO DEFEAT THE SOCIALIST MAYOR OF LISLE IN
1977. IN ADDITION, JEAN-FRANCOIS DENIAU SUPPOSEDLY
LEFT BECAUSE OF DIFFERENCES WITH HIS MINISTER, CHRISTIAN
BONNET. JEAN-PIERRE SOISSON'S MOVE FROM STATE SECRETARY
FOR UNIVERSITIES TO STATE SECRETARY FOR VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION IS REGARDED AS A DEMOTION, BUT AS ONE OF THE
ARCHITECTS OF GISCARD'S ELECTORAL VICTORY IN 1974 HE
AVOIDED BEING DROPPED FROM THE CABINET ALTOGETHER.
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